



fox squirrel

Sciurus niger

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Mammalia
Order: Rodentia
Family: Sciuridae

Features

The fox squirrel is 19 to 29 inches long, including a tail that is seven to 14 inches. It typically has a rust-yellow body mixed with gray on the back and sides. Black or albino (white) individuals can occur. Rarely there are small populations of one of these color phases, such as the black squirrels in Council Bluffs, Shenandoah, and Red Oak. The tail is very long and bushy.

Natural History

The fox squirrel lives in forest edges, timbered draws, woodlots, fencerows, and oak tree clusters. It is also a common inhabitant of cities. It is not commonly found in any area with gray squirrels. It eats fruits, tree buds, hickory nuts, acorns, walnuts, Osage orange fruits, corn, flowers, leaves, fungi, and insects. The type of food eaten depends on the season and availability. It will store foods if any are available in ample supply. The fox squirrel is active early in the morning and late in the evening, in trees and on the ground. It is known to swim. It does not hibernate but may sleep for several consecutive days in the winter. It may build a leaf nest or use a tree cavity or constructed nest box for shelter and raising young. It makes a series of sounds, but the "bark" is the most commonly used. There are two mating seasons, early

winter and late spring. Females two years old and older produce two litters per year. Females one year old usually breed once in a year. Two to four young are born after a gestation period of six weeks. Young nurse for two months.

Habitats

bottomland forests

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.